

Col Mackereth

SENIOR PEER SUPPORT COORDINATOR



Col was born and lived all of his life in Charters Towers until he sustained C6 quadriplegia as a result of a diving injury at age 18. Ironically, he was supposed to be playing football that day but decided to go for a swim and a few beers with some friends instead. Col said he believed in fate and that “my role in life was not to play State of Origin for Queensland but to achieve much greater things”.

After 11 months in the Spinal Injuries Unit, Col returned home to break the news to his parents, that even though he was unable to....

- Push his wheelchair up a gradient greater than 1:20
 - Transfer without assistance
 - Look after his own personal health care
 - Dress himself completely
 - Feed himself or prepare his own meals
 - Do housework of any kind
- ...he still intended to leave home and live independently!

“None of my mates still lived with their mums so why should I be any different.” he told his mum.

Just over a year later, after one of the steepest learning curves ever and a lot of hard work, heartbreak and sacrifice, Col found himself living back in Brisbane.

“I was sharing a flat with a bloke that I met in hospital. I was doing all of my own cooking, cleaning, personal care and housework and driving myself to work every day in my own car and getting my chair in and out,” Col said.

“I was also training with the Sporting Wheelies when I wasn’t busy socialising with friends.”



Col likes to tell stories, preferably about himself!

“People say I should be 400 years old to have done all the things that I have done so far in my life,” he said.

‘I’m writing an autobiography called *Fifty Hats* that tells stories about all the different hats I’ve worn over the years.’

Col has experienced and survived many of the major life events that most people go through in their life’s journey. To get all the details of his colourful life you will have to read his book or you could just ask him!

“I haven’t always learnt my lessons though. Since my injury, I’ve been married (twice), divorced (twice), been arrested (twice), become a father (twice), built a home (twice) and owned more cars than I care to remember,” Col said.

“I’ve lived in the city and the bush and more recently moved to Fernvale to enjoy the benefits of both lifestyles and be closer to my seven grandkids.”



Since returning to work in 1980, Col has never been unemployed.

He’s been a goat farmer, draftsman, bookkeeper, adventure camp coordinator, maths tutor, statistician, managed an employment agency and worked in a

hardware store. But by far the best thing that he has done is his current role as a Peer Support Coordinator.



“Helping people to rebuild their lives and give themselves new pictures of their future is the most rewarding thing I have ever done,” Col said.

If you want to get in touch with Col, please contact him on 0427 773 533 or email cmackereth@spinal.com.au.

 **Spinal Injuries**
ASSOCIATION